

WorkFirst Targeted Wage Initiative
Learning Labs
Business Outreach

Federal Way

Business Outreach in Federal Way is carried out by staff of the Employment Security Department's Business Solutions Unit located at the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce. Staff uses its connection with the chamber and the business community to put together a menu of activities that result in job openings for WorkFirst participants.

Routine strategies:

A daily Hot Jobs list (see attached example)

March 4, 2003 Hot Jobs



Job Title: Production Helper/Operator

Description:

Experienced mill and metal employees to work on production lines. job duties would include packaging finished material, forklift operations, cutting lumber, making skids, staging orders, using nail and staple guns etc. job will eventually work into operator position

Job Location: SKing (KENT, WA)

Educational Requirements: No School Completed

Experience Required: 1 years

Skills Desired: experienced mill and metal workers

Minimum Pay: 10

Pay Unit: Hour

Duration: Full Time, Over 150 Days

Hours Per Week: 40

Job order # #WA1179974 is located on www.go2worksource.com

Six "Hot Jobs" are sent to Federal Way WorkFirst each morning, and are available to participants exclusively for 24 hours. These positions normally have close physical access to F.W. WorkFirst clients. The list is distributed in Federal Way Job Club, on the WorkSource website. If they are not filled, they are then circulated to WorkSource centers around King County the next morning. The list also includes information on current hiring events.

Staff also maintains ongoing communication with case managers and participants through e-mail and weekly teleconferences and/or onsite meetings



Once a month, WF jobseekers have the opportunity to network and serve as “live resumes at Employer Networking Meetings (Eastside and Central Diversity Taskforce). In April, six Federal Way WorkFirst clients presented themselves at the meeting which featured REI, inc.

Business Outreach staff lend their employer expertise to job seekers, providing coaching and training on a variety of job seeking practices. These include giving workshops and presentations, and providing “employment tips of the day.”

Ongoing communication between Business Outreach and Federal Way WorkFirst staff occurs on an as-needed basis and through weekly Friday meetings. Through this dialogue, business outreach does its best to find businesses whose employment needs match the skills, interests and circumstances of job seekers. Business Outreach staff noted however, that access to job matching software would be a valuable tool.

Outcome tracking is currently being conducted through SKIES. Additionally, Federal Way Case Managers are tracking data through their systems.

One area for improvement identified by business outreach staff, however, is the need for more hiring data from case managers. Business Outreach staff are currently unable to access E-JAS, which leads to challenges when employment issues for employed WorkFirst (or recent WorkFirst) participants arise

Employer Feedback

Have you interviewed WorkFirst Job seekers/customers in the past 6 months? If so, how many?

QFC: 15-20

Group Health: At Group Health, based on volume of applicants and our current process, Human Resource staff, typically does not interview applicants for positions. We do however meet and talk with potential applicants through attending career events, in classrooms at colleges supported by Workfirst, or directly at a Workfirst office presentations. Managers typically do all their own interviewing.

Have you seen an improvement in WorkFirst Job seekers/customers ability to interview?

QFC: yes

Group Health: Over the last year, it appears that candidates I meet through different events, schools, and WorkFirst offices have been much more prepared in having a conversation about seeking employment, both in general and requesting to be considered for a specific opening.

Have you hired any WorkFirst customers in the past 6 months. If so, approximately how many?

QFC: 5-8

Group Health: Unfortunately, the way we track the source of candidates is not solid enough to respond to this question. However, I am sure of 2 specific hires as a result of candidates in school, which is a program that WorkFirst funded.

Are the WorkFirst customers you hired meeting expectations? If not, why?

QFC: Yes

Group Health: One of the 2 hires mentioned in response #3, had specific problems with coordinating school with work demands, but through the support services given by the WorkFirst Coordinator at the school, the issue was addressed and resolved.

Walla Walla

Day to day strategies business outreach strategies consist of close interaction with both the WorkSource Labor Exchange function and WorkFirst staff to identify both new and existing job openings that match closely with the goals and needs of the program participants. This process also includes identification of potential employers who meet On-the-Job-Training criteria. Job seekers are referred to job openings through the requirements stipulated by the employer and normal system referral practices. All referral activity is monitored and tracked through the SKIES database.

An additional standard strategy consists of pro-active contact with local businesses and employers informing them of services, credits, and benefits associated with the program.

Currently, business outreach staff participates in client job readiness preparation on two primary levels. First is delivering a weekly workshop directly to participants on the benefits of "Understanding the Local Labor Market." The second area is by coordinating with local employers to present a "What Employers Want" workshops once a month.

Job seekers are matched with employers via one-on-one interviews with WorkFirst counselors and through the SKIES job matching system.

Outreach staff communicates daily with various WorkFirst staff and on a weekly basis via workshop delivery outcomes.

Once a WorkFirst participant becomes employed, WorkFirst staff provide input and monitor program participants for potential issues. All issues are communicated with the Business Liaison for possible intervention with employer customers.

Job seeker progress is tracked through SKIES and E-Jas.

Spokane

As part of the job search workshop, WorkFirst job seekers are introduced to www.gotoworksource.com, American Job Bank and Workforce Explorer to obtain information on the labor market and job openings.

In addition to job postings through SKIES, WorkSource Spokane has organized / participated in five hiring events since January: Caregivers Hiring Event, Spokane Regional Business Trade Show, Third Annual Spokane Community Colleges Job Fair, and Spokesman Review Round Up. Business Outreach staff also arranges and facilitates an "Employer of the Week" on a weekly basis.

Prior to these events, WorkFirst staff and clients work on the necessary preparations, including prior research on the internet of the company they are applying for, a flexible resume, or several, if attending a career or job fair, interviewing questions and having a prepared 30 second elevator speech.

Business Outreach staff works closely with the WorkFirst staff informing them of mass hiring events, as well as employers coming in with hiring and application sessions. When order job orders come in, key WorkFirst staff are contacted to relay employer needs. They are also recruited to assist with staffing these events.

Business Outreach staff has attended Job Search Workshops and maintains consistent communication with WorkFirst staff about the need for preparedness when attending hiring events, which included a well-prepared personal portfolio with a master application, as well as customized resumes for different types of industry. Composing and practicing a live resume is also a requirement of Job Search Workshops. Several Employers have commented about being impressed with how prepared they are at Job Fairs, interviews, hiring events etc., e.g. ICT group, Virgin Mobile.

Business Outreach staff works very closely with WorkFirst staff to ensure that clients meet employer-specified requirements for job openings. Business Outreach staff also works very closely with employers to qualify and quantify the skills needed for each job order to minimize misinterpretation and gray areas. Whenever necessary, WorkSource staff will interview clients to ascertain and verify skills and experience. There is an increased emphasis on promoting On-the-Job Training to meet the specific training needs of individual businesses and workers.

Business Outreach staff works closely with placement staff and their supervisors on a daily basis. Good personal relationships are nurtured to facilitate open and timely communication. Stand-up (Impromptu) Meetings and emails are frequently utilized to clarify job requirements and employer expectations.

Business Outreach staff has coordinated and encouraged placement staff to work directly with employers to identify and resolve problems that may arise. Staff have been trained on serving businesses as a customer and are empowered to provide follow up services to ensure customer satisfaction.

In addition to SKIES and E-Jas, WorkFirst staff has designed an Excel Spreadsheet to track client activities.

Grays Harbor

Aberdeen business marketing staff actively works to locate businesses who need employees and match them with job seekers who are ready to go to work. As part of this effort, the marketing coordinator records a weekly “WorkSource Minute” that plays on three radio stations twice a week. The target audience is potential employers, and besides highlighting job seekers, other information of interest to employers—such as upcoming hiring events—are discussed.

The business marketing coordinator regularly meets with job seekers and case managers to develop an employment strategy, to understand the skills, abilities, interests, long-term career goals, special circumstances of WorkFirst participants, and to assess their overall interest in finding work. For those job seekers that are ready to go to work, he actively seeks to match employer needs with those of the job seeker. For those not quite ready to go to work, but are preparing to go to work through training or other means, he is working with those individuals on increasing their skill levels in resume writing, networking, and interviewing techniques.

Business Outreach staff does a regular 30-minute presentation in job search workshops explaining that particular role, the types of assistance that business outreach can provide, and what they need to do in order to be successful from a business perspective.

Aberdeen-Hoquiam is fortunate to have a special arrangement with the Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce’s Employer Assistance Project, which links job seekers to businesses seeking workers. Staff from WorkSource and EAP regularly collaborates on business leads and potential job seekers.

Business Outreach staff have had a larger scale WorkSource job fair with 60 WorkFirst job seekers and 10 businesses. Currently, they are working on a sector hiring event targeting businesses from the hospitality industry.

The business outreach coordinator keeps an ‘open door’ with the business community when and if issues arise from WorkFirst hires. He often tries to pinpoint potential problems when he calls employers to verify employment, asking them how the placements are working out.

One of Business Outreach’s goals for the future is to continue to strengthen relationships within the business community. They are working to remove pre-conceived notions among some potential business partners about WorkFirst participants not having necessary job skills—and they are accomplishing that through ensuring that the job seekers that they link with businesses are willing and ready to go to work, and have the necessary skills to succeed.